

To: Korleski, Christopher[korleski.christopher@epa.gov]; Deltoral, Miguel[deltoral.miguel@epa.gov]; Poy, Thomas[poy.thomas@epa.gov]; Bair, Rita[bair.rita@epa.gov]; Porter, Andrea[porters.andrea@epa.gov]
From: Bassler, Rachel
Sent: Mon 3/27/2017 7:32:47 PM
Subject: FW: Media questions -- East Chicago water

All,

We received questions from the Northwest Indiana Times regarding our FOIA'd emails. Are these questions we can respond to? Or would it be better to send a statement? Her deadline is Wednesday morning.

From the reporter: I have a list of questions regarding correspondence regarding East Chicago drinking water that I recently obtained through a FOIA request with EPA. Do you think you can get me answers and/or provide a statement by Wednesday morning?

Emails show EPA officials in August 2016 were aware of a 2002 paper titled "Effect of Phosphate Inhibitors on Lead Release From Pipes," written by Marc Edwards and Laurie McNeill, that concluded "Hexametaphosphate generally increased soluble lead release over a broad range of water qualities," and further stated, "Utilities should consider these adverse effects whenever polyphosphate is used to prevent scaling or iron precipitation; in fact, polyphosphates cannot be recommended for lead corrosion control." The emails, which were linked to an email from IDEM's Mary Hollingsworth confirming East Chicago was using sodium hexametaphosphate. EPA's Rita Bair emailed IDEM's Mary Hollingsworth Aug. 18, saying, "We need to find out if East Chicago is adding some kind of orthophosphate for CCT beyond the polyphosphate addition." Hollingsworth responded Aug. 19 by sending EPA an information sheet for a chemical called Carus 8600. It appears East Chicago started using Carus 8600 on Sept. 6, according to an email in the Virtual File Cabinet. A city engineering report says the city changed chemicals in September 2016 "under recent guidance from IDEM."

Q: Did IDEM ask East Chicago to use the ortho-polyphosphate blend Carus 8600 at the urging of EPA?

Virginia Tech professor Marc Edwards said, "While the new chemical 8600 is better than sodium hexametaphosphate, I think they could do better with just orthophosphate."

Q: Does EPA have a response to that statement?

Internal EPA emails in August 2016 also showed employees were aware of a 2005 American Water Works Association report titled “Managing Change and Unintended Consequences: Lead and Copper Rule Corrosion Control Treatment.” The report discusses several factors that may have been at play in East Chicago, including the change to membrane filtration, blending finished waters and changing corrosion control chemicals.

Q: What steps, if any, did EPA take to investigate whether any of the factors mentioned above might be affecting quality, including lead levels, in East Chicago’s water?

An email from IDEM’s Mary Hollingsworth to EPA’s Thomas Poy on Jan. 5, 2017, took issue with “misinformation” in a letter EPA’s Robert Kaplan wrote to Sen. Donnelly (I believe this to be a letter written to Rep. Pete Visclosky based on content of the letter described by Hollingsworth). The first point Hollingsworth discusses is the 15 ppb action level. The letter explains the sampling required under the Lead and Copper Rule, and Hollingsworth goes on to say results above the action level in EPA’s sequential sampling do not indicate an issue with East Chicago’s compliance or IDEM’s implementation and oversight, but might indicate an issue with the Lead and Copper Rule.

Q: Residents, environmental groups and experts agree that “any results over 15 ppb would be a major cause for concern.” Does EPA agree with that statement?

Q: Does EPA have any updates on its previously stated intention to update the Lead and Copper Rule?

Q: Hollingsworth’s Jan. 5 email says low orthophosphate levels found in the Superfund site are the result of low water flows because of dead-end lines near railroad tracks. It appears IDEM is taking a position that the low orthophosphate levels found in the Superfund site are a localized issue, not a systemwide issue as EPA has previously stated.

Q: Does EPA have any response to that?

IDEM has stated the mass relocation of people from the West Calumet Housing Complex also could result in lower orthophosphate residuals in the Superfund site.

Q: What steps, if any, has EPA taken to protect residents in the Superfund site from this

possible exposure?

Hollingsworth's Jan. 5, 2017, email also says "IDEM has always felt that working closely with EPA on drinking water issues is extremely important and we will continue to work with EPA, but because of the this situation and the way it was handled and is still being handled, our close working relationship had been compromised."

Q: Has EPA responded to this email?

Q: Isn't it important for residents to know -- regardless of whether the city is in compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule -- that they have elevated lead levels in their drinking water?

It appears EPA, IDEM and the city had been working on draft FAQs to hand out at an open house regarding lead in drinking water when Mayor Anthony Copeland suddenly upended that process by announcing water sampling results in an open letter.

Q: Were the parties initially planning to announce water testing results at a Dec 10 open house?

Emails from Miguel Del Toral and Andrea Porter on Oct. 25, 2016, say, the operator confirmed "the numbers on the MOR are orthophosphate." IDEM's Mary Hollingsworth provided an update in October that said the city was "increasing orthophosphate feed to 1 ppm leaving the plant. Their target residuals in the distribution system is now 0.75 to 1 ppm."

Q: can EPA clarify what this means? Are the numbers on the city's MORs total phosphate (total P) or orthophosphate (PO4)? Was East Chicago measuring the total amount of orthophosphate it was feeding?

